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MIDEAST PEACE PROCESS MUST RESUME
(By U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter)

Escalating violence has deadened the Middle East peace process. As usual, all sides look to the United States to influence the parties to end the violence and resume the quest for peace.

In mid-April, at the request of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, I met with Palestinian Chairman Yasir Arafat in Cairo. When I arrived for our 10:30 p.m. meeting, Arafat said that as we spoke, Israeli helicopters and missiles were attacking Palestinians in Gaza. He did not mention that the Israeli action was in retaliation for mortars fired into Israel earlier that day.

Our discussion, which lasted until nearly midnight, was interrupted every few moments by aides bringing him the latest dispatch on the fighting. I told Arafat I was convinced Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon would not resume the peace process until the violence ended.

Since the sequence of events demonstrated that Israel was responding to Palestinian provocation, it was up to Arafat to demonstrate his best efforts to stop the violence. After all, it was Arafat's famous letter of Sept. 9, 1993, that induced then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to shake Arafat's hand at their historic meeting with President Clinton on the White House lawn four days later. In that letter, Arafat renounced violence and promised to punish any Palestinian who violated that commitment.

Arafat responded that he had made an unequivocal declaration at the recent Arab summit. When his statement was examined, it was obvious it was so conditional as to be meaningless. I then asked Arafat why he had rejected former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's generous settlement offer on major concessions on Jerusalem and additional territory on the West Bank. Arafat said he had accepted the Barak proposal. Again, on examination, there were so many ifs, ands and buts that his response was meaningless. Our meeting ended with no realistic hope that any significant action could be expected from Arafat.

The situation was equally bleak when I traveled on to Beirut and Damascus. Hezbollah, backed by Iran and Syria, had continued to attack Israeli border settlements from Southern Lebanon, leading Israel to bomb Syrian radar. Beirut once touted as the Paris of the Middle East, has not recovered from Lebanon's civil war because of factional quarrels and Syria's continuing dominance of the country.

In Damascus, Syria's foreign minister Farouk Shara agreed with Sharon that Israeli-Syrian peace talks on the Golan Heights would be pointless at this time. Before President Hafez al-Assad's death, the parties had come very close to a settlement but were now back to square one.

Notwithstanding the bleak prospects, the Bush administration, aided by Congress, must push the parties back to the bargaining table. There is no doubt that the countries involved listen to Uncle Sam. When Secretary of State Colin Powell criticized Sharon's tough retaliation as "excessive and disproportionate," Israel modified its tactics.

Congress has spoken emphatically: 87 senators and 209 House members wrote on April 6 to the President calling for the closing of the Palestinian office in Washington if the Palestinians did not stop inciting violence. I have urged President Bush to appoint a special envoy for the Middle East just as President Richard Nixon used Henry Kissinger for

shuttle diplomacy and Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton assigned envoys such as Dennis Ross to the peace process. President Bush may soon find it necessary to become personally involved like his predecessors.

The escalation of Israeli-Palestinian violence may encourage other terrorist groups, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, to attack not only Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but also U.S. interests around the world. The peace process cannot be abandoned; one way or another, a way must be found for Israelis and Palestinians to live together on that tiny parcel of hallowed and historic land. Our vital national interests in the region make it imperative that the United States actively pursue a resumption of the Middle East peace process.

TRIBUTE TO BILLIE PENN

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Billie Penn, a friend and member of my staff for the last 18 years. Billie is one of the most energetic, friendly and sweet people I know. Today this bundle of energy with a heart of gold is retiring.

Billie opened my Lawton office and has managed it for the last 18 years. As my field representative for Southwestern Oklahoma, she has worked diligently for the people of Beckham, Washita, Caddo, Greer, Kiowa, Harmon, Jackson, Tillman, Comanche, Cotton, Stephens, and Jefferson counties.

Billie's enthusiasm is contagious. I think we'll have to hire four or five people just to fill her spot. Besides working for me, Billie finds energy to golf with Bill, her husband of 41 years, visit her kids—William and Allison—and spoil her grandkids, Alisa, Skyler, Nathaniel and Ashlyn. She's active in Lawton's Chamber of Commerce, her church, Grace Fellowship, and probably any other cause that asks for a helping hand.

Today, there was a surprise retirement party for her that I'm sorry I could not attend. I can only imagine the numbers of people that showed up to celebrate the great job Billie has done. There is no one else like her and she will be missed.

Billie is a true friend and a real treasure. I am grateful for her outstanding service to the people of Oklahoma. We all have benefited from her hard work.

Today, I wish her all the best as she begins her retirement.

**LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT
OF 2001**

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about hate crimes legislation I introduced with Senator KENNEDY last month. The Local Law Enforcement Act of 2001 would add new categories to current hate crimes legislation sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

Today, Mr. President, I would like to detail a heinous crime that occurred July 29, 2000 in Mahwah, New Jersey. A man who allegedly attacked two men

after calling them gay was arrested and charged with aggravated assault, bias harassment, and bias assault. Witnesses told police that the alleged perpetrator, William Courain, 26, was at an apartment complex party when he began making remarks to several of the guests about their sexual preferences. He left the party and confronted two men in the parking lot, making obscene comments about their sexual orientation, before attacking them. Witnesses say he began punching and kicking the two victims, one of whom suffered bleeding from the mouth and eyes and was treated at a local hospital. (The RECORD, August 1, 2000)

I believe that government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 is now a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation, we can change hearts and minds as well.

**JOINT TASK FORCE FULL
ACCOUNTING**

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, recently, in a remote area of Vietnam, a helicopter with 16 passengers and crew aboard went down in a central Vietnamese jungle. Vietnamese officials reported that there were no survivors. The passengers on this aircraft included seven American heroes. One of those heroes, I am sad to report, was from New Mexico, Major Charles Lewis II. Major Lewis was an Air Force ROTC graduate of Mayfield High School and New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, NM. He was an outstanding student and deeply committed to his country through his service with the Air Force. We are shocked and saddened at the loss of Major Lewis and these American heroes.

In connection with the recent "National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day", I salute Major Lewis and his downed colleagues. Moreover, I salute the heroic contributions of all those who serve in the Joint Task Force Full Accounting, JTFFA, and the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii, CILHI, whose noble mission is to resolve the cases of Americans still unaccounted for during America's wars. We especially honor the unsung victims of this tragic accident who were carrying out our nation's abiding commitment to account for and honor the lives of POW-MIAs lost in the conflict in Southeast Asia three decades ago. They were part of an advance team scheduled to begin recovery work at six MIA sites in Vietnam beginning this month.

Since 1973, the JTFFA and CILHI have conducted investigations and excavations that have accounted for 603 American POW-MIA personnel. Since 1985, with the full support of cooperative Vietnamese assistants, members of the Joint Task Force and the Central